

# BHDDH Bulletin

CRAIG S. STENNING  
DIRECTOR

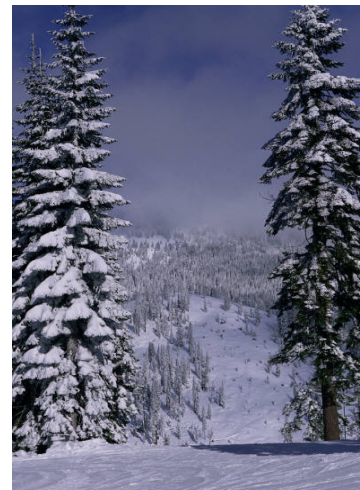
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## A Holiday Message from Director Stenning

The holiday season should be a time for joy and celebration. However the events at Newtown weigh on all of us. In addition, for individuals with mental illness and other disabilities, the holidays may invoke feelings of anxiety, stress, loneliness, fear or panic. It is important to take care of yourself at this time of year and to help others. Maintaining routines such as getting enough sleep, continuing to take medication, eating regular meals and exercising are helpful during this stressful time. If family gatherings are uncomfortable, be sure to schedule some down-time. If you find you need additional help, you may want to attend a support group or keep appointments with mental health professionals.

Although we have high expectations for the holiday season, this time of year can be stressful for everyone, particularly those who are struggling to recover from Hurricane Sandy and those of us who may have been affected by the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Other situations such as personal grief, illness and economic concerns can also cast a shadow over the holidays. During difficult times, we may experience overwhelming feelings of sadness and loss instead of happiness and cheer. These are normal and expected reactions. It is common for people to experience strong emotions. During this time, memories of past loss and grief often come to mind.

As you cope with any feelings you may experience, it is important to express them. Don't push them away or hide them. You may need to take time to grieve and cry in order to feel better. Try not to overindulge in drinking or eating to escape your stress, make every effort to ensure you get enough rest and spend time with family and friends during the holiday season. Acknowledge that you may be reacting to a significant event and it will take time to heal. Remember to think about what is important in life. And bring the message of hope and recovery to your hearts.



## BHDDH Disaster Behavioral Health Coordinator Speaks at 2012 School Safety and Mitigation Conference

Susan Earley, Rhode Island Disaster Behavioral Health Coordinator and member of the Rhode Island School Safety Advisory Committee, spoke at the 2012 School Safety and Mitigation Conference held on November 1 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Warwick. Her presentation, entitled "Introduction to Psychological First Aid and the Rhode Island Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team" emphasized the importance of a behavioral health response plan in all school safety plans. Her presentation included information about the value of staff training in Psychological First Aid (PFA), and also reviewed normal reactions to abnormal events, features of disasters that determine the degree of trauma or stress, and the psychological and social losses caused by disasters.

"A comprehensive school emergency response plan should include a section on the behavioral health aspects of critical incidents and define who is available within the school and community to respond", says Sue Earley. Each school's ability to respond will vary depending on a number of factors including the nature of the event, the number of people involved, the resources within the school, and the relationships the school has developed with external resources." "Our Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team (DBHRT) is a group of trained, disaster behavioral health professionals and volunteers who can be called upon to enhance the response capacity when local resources may be insufficient to meet the need", said Craig Stenning, Director of BHDDH. "I can activate and deploy the State's DBHRT to supplement a schools' response efforts."

Other presentations at the conference included "Active Shooter" by Sergeant Derek Borek of the Rhode Island State Police and "Behavioral Health in School Emergency Management, presented by Mark Lindberg, PHD, Liaison, New Hampshire Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team.

## **The Alliance for Better Long Term Care Presents Director Stenning with the Mark A. Sjoberg Justice Award**

At the 33<sup>rd</sup> annual meeting of the Alliance for Better Long Term Care on November 28, Kathleen Heren, the state of Rhode Island's Long Term Care Ombudsman, presented the Mark A. Sjoberg Justice Award to BHDDH Director Craig Stenning.



According to Ombudsman Heren, the award was given to Director Stenning "in gratitude and respect for his many years of dedication, tireless advocacy, genuine compassion and commitment to the developmentally disabled citizens of Rhode Island."

Founded in 1979, the Alliance helps protect the rights of elderly and disabled persons who live in long term care settings and those who receive licensed health care or hospice services in the home. The organization's mission is to improve the quality of life and health care of residents of long term care facilities, assisted living facilities, and those who receive licensed health care or hospice in the home.

## **BHDDH Implements Final Phase of Project Sustainability**

Phase I of Project Sustainability, an initiative intended to increase transparency and consistency across the system of services available to persons with developmental disabilities, was implemented in 2011. In phase 2, which was implemented this year, BHDDH further defined services, developed rate methodologies for each service, and began to administer the Supports Intensity Scale (SIS) assessment to participants. SIS is a standardized assessment tool designed by the American Association of Intellectual Disabilities (AAIDD) to measure the pattern and intensity of supports an adult with a developmental disability requires to be successful in a community setting. Over 1,300 SIS evaluations were completed this year.

With participation from providers, advocates, and family members, BHDDH also completed a SIS clinical validation study this year. The study was used to update levels of services that serve as a basis for developing service packages for providers.

Participants continue to have the choice to purchase services and the flexibility to use community service packages in order to purchase day program activities, employment-related services or community-based services. Beginning this month, notices will be sent to participants with anniversary dates in February, March and April, letting them know which SIS Tiers they are assigned so that they can develop their annual Individual Service Plans (ISPs). Beginning in January, notices will be sent to other participants 90 days prior to their anniversary dates for ISP planning purposes. BHDDH is in the process of scheduling community meetings to explain all of the changes to participants and their families.

## **Patrick Kennedy, Grand Marshall of Worldwide Rally for Recovery! will Attend the Rhode Island Rally4Recovery on September 21, 2013**

### **Rhode Island Rally4Recovery is 2013 National Hub Event**

Patrick Kennedy, the Grand Marshall for the 2013 Worldwide Rally for Recovery!, will speak at the Rhode Island Rally4Recovery which takes place on Saturday, September 21. The announcement was made by Faces & Voices of Recovery, the national organization of individuals and organizations joining together with a united voice to advocate for public action to deliver the power, possibility and proof of recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs. around the world.



"Former Congressman Kennedy is a valued advocate for individuals with mental illness and substance use issues", said Craig Stenning, emcee of the Rhode Island Rally since the inception of the event. "We are pleased that he is Grand Marshall for 2013 Rallies for Recovery throughout the world and that he will be attending the Rhode Island Rally."

Please submit any items that may be of interest to our readers by e-mail or fax to Deb Varga: [dvarga@bhddh.ri.gov](mailto:dvarga@bhddh.ri.gov); fax: 401-462-3204.



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